

TO GO TO THE HEART OF AFRICA IN SEARCH OF A FLEA

JAMES STEVENS, known among circus men, especially with the Ringling shows, as "Jimmy Click," has left Chicago on one of the strangest errands ever planned by man. He is going into the heart of Africa, up into the southern end of the Congo state, 150 miles west of Lake Tanganyika to catch a flea.

Before that he is going to London to call upon the Hon. Charles Rothschild, the multi-millionaire, and talk with him concerning the flea and arrange with the multi-millionaire banker for the purchase of the flea. If it is captured, he wants to catch the flea to add it to the wonderful Rothschild collection, which already comprises over 11,000 species of fleas, believing that it is the strangest of all that strange tribe of parasites.

"Jimmy Click" is one of Ringling's animal men, and has for years been in charge of the expeditions into Africa in search of strange and unusual animals to add to the menagerie. He has hunted over half the interior of the dark continent, and shipped scores upon scores of beasts and strange fowls to his employers.

Found Strange Monkey in Africa.

Last summer and fall he was in equatorial Africa and picked up as a curiosity a strange member of the monkey family, a queer-looking little animal that became extremely friendly with him. Naturalists who saw the little animal were puzzled, and tried in vain to classify him. He belonged, as far as could be learned, to some new tribe of monkeys. He had the general characteristics of the Simiidae family, with the curled tail of the Cebidae, appearing to be somewhere between the two—a sort of missing link in the families, and, stranger still, he had the white eye-rings found only in the Monkeys among all monkeys.

Several naturalists examined the monkey and offered good prices for him, but Stevens refused to sell, having become fond of the little fellow.

The irony of the situation can be imagined from the fact that "Jimmy" as the monkey was called, was infested with fleas. Jimmy Click worked him to and fro and spent hours picking off the fleas—the same kind that he is now going to Africa to seek. He didn't know a thing about fleas. He thought a flea was a flea the world over, and he did not know that every species of animal has its own species of fleas. Neither did he know that at one time the Hon. Charles Rothschild fitted out a special expedition and sent it far up into the polar regions to catch the flea of the arctic fox, spending over \$5,000 to add that rare specimen to his collection.

Learns the Value of Fleas.

When the circus was in the coliseum in Chicago "Jimmy Click" was with it preparing to spend a year at home with the menagerie that he had helped to build up. One afternoon he was busy driving out the few remaining fleas when the Rev. Charles B. Pavey, a wealthy retired minister who for years has made a hobby of the study of insects, appeared, and, drawing out a microscope, asked "Jimmy Click's" permission to examine the flea that had just been captured.

Permission was granted. The minister made the examination, and plainly showed his excitement. He asked permission to take the flea home and examine it more closely. "Jimmy Click" was willing. In fact, he stated that although the reverend gentleman appeared to have bugs enough, he didn't mind letting him take another one. The remark was lost upon Mr. Pavey, whose attention was wholly engrossed in the flea. He placed it in a pill bottle and departed. The next day he returned, showing extreme excitement, and asked permission of the management to see the owner of "Jimmy." Then he frankly told "Jimmy Click" that the flea was an unknown species; that its value to science was incalculable, and incidentally that the Hon. Charles Rothschild probably would pay as much as \$5,000, if not more, for it.

That excited Stevens, and he began kicking himself, thinking of the million dollars or more worth of those things he had destroyed just to ease "Jimmy's" feelings, and he resolved to cultivate them in the future.

Mr. Pavey explained that the flea was peculiar in the unusual sharpness and size of its mandibles, and because of the extraordinary elongation of the hind femora. He declared that if the flea could jump in proportion to the kangaroo-like length of the femora it would be the champion high jumper of all the flea tribe. Besides it had claws on its wings, a thing known only in the flea of the Moa-zin bird of South America.

Riches Take Sudden Flight.

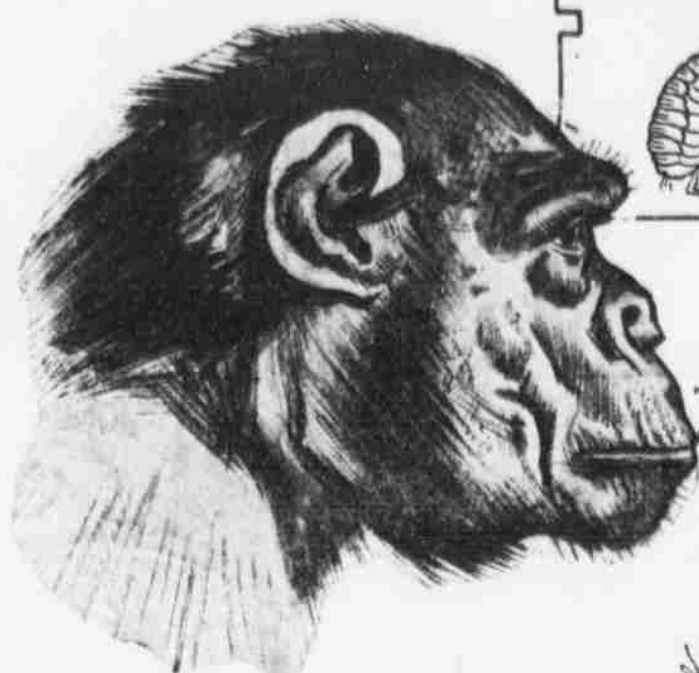
The minister returned the flea of the circus man and departed, advising him to send it to Mr. Rothschild at once, explaining all about the animal on which it was found, and the circumstances.

That night Stevens composed the letter prepared to get rich. Also that night the cork came out of the bottle and the flea escaped. The loss was trifling, for Stevens knew where to hunt for more. He sent away the letter, and back came a reply stating that if the flea was what it was represented to be the multi-millionaire would pay a good price for it. The figure named was not made known.

But before the reply came "Jimmy" caught a heavy cold and died, and Stevens searched the remains in vain for another flea. He did not know that the flea immediately became a dead body, whether from some psychological or physical reason no one knows. Then he searched the other monkeys. He found many fleas—but none like those from "Jimmy"—and he learned the reason when the Rev. Mr. Pavey informed him that the different species of fleas are bitterly antagonistic, and that a colony on one animal will instantly set upon and slay any visitors.

To Hunt for Fleas and Lions.

When the letter came Stevens determined to drop his plans of returning in America for a year and to start at



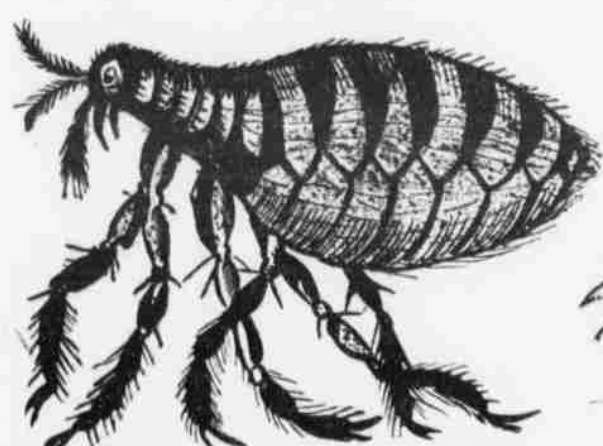
BARON ROTHSCHILD

once for Africa to catch one of "Jimmy's" tribe. He arranged with the circus people to take a side line of hunting lions while in search of his flea, and he started at once for Africa, via London, armed with the scientific description of the flea as made by Mr. Pavey.

The Rothschild collection of fleas—now almost complete, but still lacking the "Jimmy" flea—represents one of the most stupendous scientific works of the century, and Dr. Jordan, who has charge of the famous collection at Tring park, the Rothschild country place near London, has devoted years to making it perfect. It is scarcely a fact—it is a great scientific effort in which no money or labor has been spared. Mr. Rothschild himself spends much time when not at his great banking house in London in watching the performances of fleas, studying them under microscopes and encephalating their leaps, as well as studying their remarkable intelligence. Bands of the flea are trained to march with microscopic muskets, to play games, to drill like cavalry, carrying toy horsemen on their backs, to draw coaches with other fleas sitting on the box driving.

Wonderful Jumping Powers.

The remarkable leaping powers of fleas and their wonderful strength make them interesting almost as much as



MR. ROTHSCHILD'S LOBSTER-LIKE FLEA FROM SOUTH AMERICA.

their strange diversification in form. The flea of the human being, the ordinary pulex irritans, can jump forty times its own height. If a man 6 feet tall could jump proportionately he could easily leap over one of the big State street stores. They carry weights many times over their own weight and with ease, performing wonderful leaps while carrying heavy burdens.

According to the Rev. Mr. Pavey, the physical makeup of the flea found on "Jimmy" should have made him a much greater jumper than the ordinary flea because his legs were so long. Also he should have been a great fighter—a mighty warrior among his kind—because his birdlike beak was so sharp and his mandibles provided with about 700 sawlike projections, extraordinarily strong and sharp.

The flea, it appeared, partook of some of "Jimmy's" physical peculiarities, even as other species of fleas partake of the peculiarities of the animals upon which they subsist, and "Jimmy Click" declares that "Jimmy" was the best jumping monkey he ever saw, size considered.

May Solve Problem of Species.

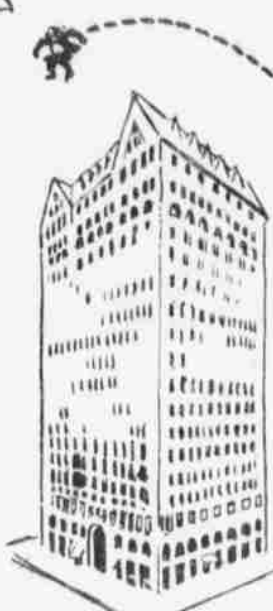
Some may wonder at the zeal with which Mr. Rothschild and Dr. Jordan have for years pursued the study of fleas. It is easily understood when it is explained that their theory is that the evolution of species may possibly be traced through fleas. A different species of flea subsists on each species of warm blooded animal. Why not discover through the likeness or dissimilarity of fleas the



COMMON HUMAN FLEA (PULEX IRRITANS) ENLARGED



LEAPING POSITION OF THE VELVET SPRING-TAIL.



A FLEA CAN JUMP 40 TIMES ITS OWN HEIGHT IF A MAN 6 FEET HIGH WERE PROPORTIONATELY STRONG HE COULD JUMP OVER THE MASONIC TEMPLE.

relation or lack of relation of the animals that they infest? Dr. Jordan and Mr. Rothschild admit that it is possible some belligerent tribes of fleas inhabiting, say, a chimpanzee, may have at some time declared war upon some peaceful tribe of fleas inhabiting a rhinoceros, invaded the territory of the peaceful tribe, and held forcible possession, becoming in time naturalized, but this does not make their theory any the less interesting. Also it has no bearing on the fact that they are willing to pay "Jimmy Click" generously if he will go into the heart of Africa and capture a new species of flea to add to the collection, and because theory does not count with "Jimmy Click"—he is on route for the Luabala river district to capture a flea.

QUEER THINGS that happen to Babies



BABIES—tender, soft, helpless babies—apparently at the mercy of the slightest accident, survive and come smiling through adventures that would mean death to adults, live and are unharmed after accidents that no grown person could survive. Babies are paradoxes. They die from slight blows on the head, then fall five stories and alight cooing on the ground; they perish from slight ailments, and live through epidemics that sweep their parents and seniors away by scores. Some claim that a special Providence watches out for fools, and babies, and drunks. Physicians declare that babies escape death from falls and such accidents because their bones are soft, and because they fall in natural positions.

Scores of mothers whose babies have had seemingly miraculous escapes from death believe that a kind Providence has saved the babies and returned them alive and well to them.

Found Fritz in a Sewer.

One of the most remarkable escapes from death ever recorded was that of a 2 year old Chicago boy living on West Division street. He escaped the watchful eye of his mother and wandered through the back yard into the alley and then to the street. He was missed a few moments later. Night was falling and a steady rain was pouring down. All night and far into the next day the people of the neighborhood searched for the missing child but until late in the morning not a trace of him was found. Then a passerby heard a faint call. He stopped and listened. The sound was repeated. Again he listened, following the faint feeble cries that he heard. The cries seemed to come from a catchbasin that led into a sewer. From the gutter, flushed with rain water, a sloping inlet eight inches long, six inches wide, led down into the sewer. Glancing down this he saw something—a mass of tow colored hair. In an instant he was stretched flat in the gutter, stretching his arm frantically down the inlet. The tips of his fingers just touched the hair.

Leaping to his feet, he called wildly for help. Men ran from every direction. In a minute the cover had been torn from the manhole. Strong arms dragged little Fritz from the slime of the sewer. Half an hour later he was cuddled



in his mother's arms. He had slipped down the narrow opening into the sewer. His body was immersed. The water poured over his head from the gutter. His eyes, nose, and ears were filled with dirt washed down upon him. Yet he lived, and the next day was playing with his brothers and sisters, seemingly none the worse for his fourteen hour immersion.

Fell Four Stories, Uninjured.

George Davis, aged 15 months, was playing on the back porch of his parents' apartments, on Belmont avenue, in Chicago. He toddled over to the side of the porch, rolled under the railing, and fell four stories, alighting on a cement walk. The mother, screaming with fear, ran down the stairs. Neighbors from the other flats, breathless with fear, rushed to the spot. George was sitting up scared and whimpering. His mother hugged him to her breast and he wept loudly. Half an hour later he was sitting in the sun playing with his rattle. Except for a bruise on the head he was uninjured.

One escape which almost passes belief was that of a year old baby who was in the froggish fire horror. The parents, in the rush, had smuggled it into the theater and when the fire started the mother, in a frenzy of excitement, ran to the front of the balcony and tossed the child down to the orchestra floor, screaming for some one to save it. What happened to the child during the burning scene of horror that followed no one knows, but the father and mother, who finally escaped, found it in the care of a policeman in a restaurant next to the theater. The policeman found it on a seat in the theater, uninjured.

Another baby that had a similar experience died a few days after the fire in which its mother perished.

Run Over by Forty-one Cars.

Little Annie McIntyre of Blanchester, O., had an experience which is without parallel. She is 2 years old. Early in April she toddled out of the yard while her mother was busy and disappeared. When her mother next saw her she was playing on the railroad track. The mother ran through the back yard toward the track, but before she could reach her child a long freight train rumbled past. She saw the



baby disappear and shut her eyes to close out the horror of the scene. The train of forty-one cars passed and the mother running forward found Annie sitting in the cinders, waiting for fright. Her little body had gone entirely under the train and the only injury was a burn, and bruised spot on the top of her head where the firebox of the locomotive evidently struck her and knocked her flat between the rails. The blow evidently stunned her and prevented her from moving and being crushed to pieces.

Scarcely less remarkable is the story of Hildie Newman of Newellville, Ark. She escaped the vigilance of her mother, crept into a boat drawn up at the river's edge below the house, and commenced to play. Twenty hours later the boat was picked up at West Memphis, forty-two miles below Newellville, and the baby was asleep under a seat, chilled and hungry, but unhurt. Her rocking had caused the boat to float away from the landing.

Baby's Escape from Slocum Disaster.

The awful Slocum holocaust in the East river, in which hundreds of Sunday school children perished, furnishes one instance of remarkable deliverance of a baby. Little Greta Schermer, aged 10 months, was with her mother when the fire swept the big excursion boat. The mother perished, but evidently not until she threw her baby into the water. Over an hour after the charred hull of the steamer sank, searchers who were picking up bodies saw a little object floating in the water. They rowed to it and found Greta alive and unhurt. Her skirts had buoyed her up and she had floated until her saviors came.

Another instance of the exemption of babies from trouble is told in the writings of an American missionary at Wallajah, India, one of the centers of the recent earthquake disturbances. The missionary writes that the child was in its home when the shock came and threw down the building. There were seven adults in the house and all perished. Two days later passersby heard the wail of an infant coming from under the debris of the house from which the seven bodies had been taken and the natives, delving in the ruins, found a child, unhurt, but almost starved. Two stones in falling had made an arch over the little body and it was untouched. How the searchers overlooked it while taking out the bodies the missionary does not explain.

